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Preliminary views and suggestions on the preparations for the 10-year review of the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Background

1. At the nineteenth special session of the United Nations General Assembly, held in 1997, which undertook the five-year comprehensive review of the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Governments committed themselves to ensuring that the 10-year comprehensive review would demonstrate greater measurable progress in achieving sustainable development.

2. In its resolution 53/188, the General Assembly stressed the importance of high-quality preparations for the forthcoming 10-year review, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, for consideration at its fifty-fifth session in the year 2000, a report on possible ways and means of ensuring effective preparations for the review.

3. In follow-up to that resolution, the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its seventh session, requested the Secretary-General to submit a preliminary report for initial discussion at its eighth session, containing, *inter alia*, suggestions on the form, scope and nature of the preparatory process for the 10-year review, with a view to providing guidance to the Secretary-General in preparing his report for the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

4. In its resolution 54/218, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to include the views of Member States in his report to the Commission at its eighth session, and invited Member States to submit their views to the Secretariat. To the extent that responses of Member States have been received at the time of submission of the present report, they are reflected. Views and suggestions which Governments may wish to submit at a later stage will be incorporated into the report of the Secretary-General to be submitted to the Assembly.

II. General considerations

5. The main challenge of the 2002 review is to organize an effective and efficient, participatory event of high political profile and visibility. High-quality and timely preparations will be essential to the success of the 2002 event. Effective preparations should start from a clear set of ideas about the goals and substantive focus of the 2002 review, its desired outcome and the organization of the preparatory process.

6. Many Governments stressed that there is a need to revitalize the international dialogue on sustainable development and strengthen the commitment of the international community to sustainable development. Governments felt that the 10-year review should be seen as an opportunity to mobilize political support for the further implementation of the outcome of UNCED, in particular Agenda 21.

7. Governments stressed that Agenda 21 continues to provide a solid and vital foundation on which to build. While Agenda 21 should not be renegotiated, the review process should identify new and emerging areas that were not included in Agenda 21 and would warrant consideration.

8. Several Governments emphasized that the 2002 review will have the potential to increase the level of commitment to sustainable development by civil society partners if it is based on the notion of shared responsibility. The involvement and participation of business and industry, non-governmental organizations, the scientific community and other major groups will be crucial and should be supported, not only in the event itself but also throughout the preparatory process.

III. Format, participation and venue of the 2002 event

9. While most Governments are of the opinion that the 2002 event should be organized as a special conference, organizing it as a special session of the General Assembly has also been put forth as an option. Several proposals were made on the form and the title of the event to acknowledge its importance and high political profile. Proposals include: (a) a ministerial conference, including a summit segment, with the participation of heads of state and government; (b) a world conference at the level of heads of state and government; (c) a conference, with participation at least at the ministerial level; (d) a world summit conference on sustainable development, and (e) a world conference on sustainable development. There is, however, a common recognition that the event should provide for high political visibility and attract participation at the highest political level.

10. Most Governments are of the opinion that the 2002 event should be held at a location other than United Nations Headquarters, preferably in the developing world. Specifically, Africa or Asia was proposed. As for the timing, it was proposed to hold the event in June 2002 so as to coincide with the tenth anniversary of UNCED.

11. Governments suggested that participation should include but not necessarily be limited to Governments, relevant United Nations agencies, secretariats of the UNCED and post-UNCED conventions relevant to Agenda 21, secretariats of relevant functional commissions (e.g., the Commissions for Social Development and on Population and Development, the Status of Women and Human Settlements), and major groups as defined by Agenda 21.

12. Ensuring adequate participation of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, in both the participatory process and the event itself are of great concern to many Governments.

13. Many Governments stressed the importance of ensuring a productive dialogue among all partners of civil society, thereby building on the modalities that have successfully evolved in the Commission. Adequate arrangements should be made during the preparatory process and in the event itself, bearing in mind their intergovernmental nature and the rules and procedures of the United Nations.

14. With regard to the participation of major groups in the 2002 event, many Governments stressed that major groups from developing countries should be assisted so as to ensure a fair balance between developed and developing country major group representation.

15. Various Governments suggested that the Commission, at its eighth session, should determine the basic elements for the 2002 review process. The General Assembly, at its fifty-fifth session, should elaborate on the form, scope and nature of the process and adopt a resolution thereon.

IV. Scope of the review

16. Many Governments emphasized that the 2002 review should focus on the comprehensive and critical review and assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21. Reviews and assessments should be carried out at all levels, including the local, national, regional and international levels, and by Governments and all other national stakeholders and the United Nations system. Actions taken to implement Agenda 21 and constraints that have hampered its effective implementation need to be addressed, along with measures to improve the further implementation of Agenda 21. The comprehensive review and assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21 would serve to identify: (a) areas where progress has been made; (b) areas where further effort are needed; and (c) new challenges and opportunities that have emerged since UNCED, in particular those resulting from globalization and technological progress, such as in the area of new communication technology.

17. Some Governments suggested that an evaluation of the results achieved in the implementation of the environment-related conventions should also be carried out. Such evaluation should, however, not entail any interference with the independent and autonomous decision-making processes of the respective conferences of the parties.

18. Several Governments also suggested undertaking an evaluation of the effectiveness and adequacy of international financial institutions as well as international finance mechanisms, including the Global Environment Facility.

V. Goals and focus

19. Many Governments emphasized the need for establishing clear goals for the 2002 event, in part to establish the political importance of the 2002 event in the eyes of high-level policy makers and the public at large as well as to ensure the desired outcome. Such goals could include:

(a) Comprehensive and critical assessment of the progress that has been made in sustainable development at all levels and by Governments and all other stakeholders;

(b) Identification of new challenges since UNCED that have not been included in Agenda 21 and of priorities for further action, and ways to address those challenges and priorities;

(c) Endorsement of renewed efforts to attain the UNCED commitments and to further implement the concept of sustainable development, as it encompasses

the interdependent triangle of social, economic and environmental dimensions;

(d) Adoption of measures for an effective and efficient follow up to the 10-year review, including a programme of action for the improved implementation of Agenda 21, strengthening the institutional capacity of the United Nations system to promote sustainable development, improvements in the methods of work of the Commission and a future work programme for the Commission.

20. Governments stressed that the agenda for the 2002 review should be agreed through a process of consultations between Governments and with the active involvement of all stakeholders. Many Governments highlighted the need for a focused agenda, which would greatly facilitate the preparatory process, provide a point of departure for addressing priorities and new challenges in the field of sustainable development, and allow for substantive and forward-looking results. While some Governments favoured a focus on cross-sectoral issues, others suggested including discussions on important sectoral areas, such as forests, oceans, climate, freshwater and energy. Many Governments advocated a balance between the sectoral and cross-sectoral issues of Agenda 21.

21. A number of Governments emphasized that priorities should be chosen on which to focus the agenda of the 2002 review. In choosing priorities, Governments suggested the following considerations:

(a) The economic and social pillars of sustainable development should be given more consideration in integrating all dimensions of sustainable development;

(b) The 2002 review should put a special focus on development aspects. In that context, poverty reduction should be a central issue, and the interrelations between poverty reduction and sustainable development should be adequately addressed;

(c) Moving towards more sustainable patterns of production and consumption patterns continues to be of great importance;

(d) New developments at the global level since UNCED should be taken into account. Globalization, foreign direct investment, new financial instruments and technological advances, such as in the areas of information and communication technology, present challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. Financing for sustainable development should be discussed in such a broader perspective. It was suggested that consideration be given to the broad-based theme "Investment for sustainable development";

(e) While implementation of sustainable development has to occur mainly at the national level, global institutions play an important role in assisting countries in developing and implementing appropriate policies and measures. Ways of strengthening global institutions and instruments in the field of sustainable development should therefore be addressed in the 2002 review;

(f) The implementation of the target to adopt a national sustainable development strategy by 2002, which was agreed by all countries, should be reviewed, with a view to learning from experience and exploring ways of improving the quality and relevance of such strategies;

(g) The implementation of the outcome of the 2002 review needs to be assured. In this regard, suitable instruments should be identified and emphasis given to the improved coordination and integration of relevant policies and institutional arrangements.

VI. Preparatory process

22. Most Governments emphasized the importance of a forward-looking, problem-solving, action-oriented preparatory process.

23. Various Governments stressed that the 10-year review should keep in mind the need to take a coordinated and integrated approach to the implementation of all the relevant major United Nations conferences since UNCED. The outcomes of the five-year reviews of the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) should feed into the review process. The outcomes of the South-South Summit in April 2000 and the high-level consultations on finance for development in 2001 could also add value to the review process.

24. Several Governments stressed the importance of enhancing coherence in various intergovernmental

bodies and processes, and strengthening linkages and coordination among environment-related conventions and institutional arrangements. Efforts along these lines would help in maintaining the momentum for global progress towards sustainable development.

25. Many Governments proposed that based on the outcome of the preparatory process, the 2002 event should confirm the priorities and emerging issues to be focused on during the next 10-year programme, approve appropriate solutions to the obstacles and key problems identified during the preparatory process, and adopt a 10-year programme of work for the improved implementation of Agenda 21. This work programme should be focused, implementable, measurable and achievable within the suggested time-frame.

A. Preparations at the national and regional levels

26. Most Governments emphasized that priority should be given to review processes that are country- and region-based. It was emphasized that countries need to make their own assessments through a collective effort, including Governments and all other stakeholders. The establishment of national working groups of experts could contribute to a coordinated review process at the country level and facilitate interlinkages with regional preparatory processes.

27. Many Governments proposed to focus the national preparatory processes on the review of the implementation of Agenda 21, highlighting the areas where progress had been made and identifying problem areas and priorities for further action.

28. Most Governments stressed that the 2002 review process should include a strong regional component. Regional preparatory processes should be established to determine, based on the outcome of the national preparatory processes, regional priorities and new initiatives for the further implementation of Agenda 21, including, as suggested, the joint application of best practices by some countries. The elements for future work in the field of sustainable development that were identified during the national and regional preparatory processes should inform the intergovernmental preparatory process.

29. The national councils for sustainable development or their equivalents could play an important role in facilitating national preparations and linking such preparations to regional preparatory processes. A major purpose of the forthcoming meeting of national councils for sustainable development being organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Earth Council prior to the eighth session of the Commission would be to discuss ways and means to consolidate country assessments on progress achieved in sustainable development into comprehensive regional assessments.

30. The regional commissions could also greatly facilitate regional preparations. The regional consultative meetings, which were organized by the Department and the respective regional commissions for Asia and the Pacific, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean in 1999 and 2000, discussed regional preparations for the 10-year reviews of the implementation of Agenda 21 as well as the involvement of the regional commissions in these preparations. One of the main outcomes of the regional meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean was the mandate to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to undertake a regional review of the implementation of Agenda 21 and to organize a Latin American and Caribbean preparatory meeting in 2001. The Economic Commission for Africa organized a high-level stakeholders meeting on sustainable development in January 2000, which considered and recommended key steps in the organization of the African preparatory process for the 2002 review.

31. The involvement of national focal points for national reporting will be important. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is planning a meeting with the participation of focal points for national reporting in late 2000. The planned meeting could assess the effectiveness of the current reporting process with a view to making suggestions for possible improvements.

32. Many Governments stressed that developing countries would need technical and financial assistance from the international community to prepare effectively for and participate in the national and regional preparatory processes.

B. Intergovernmental process

33. The intergovernmental preparatory process should commence well in advance with the

organization of a series of preparatory sessions. Many Governments proposed that the Commission serve as the preparatory committee for the intergovernmental preparatory process. Other options mentioned included the Economic and Social Council, an ad hoc committee of the General Assembly or an additional preparatory committee. In general, it was stressed that any option retained should ensure universal participation.

34. Most Governments felt that an open-ended intergovernmental preparatory process, including a number of preparatory sessions, should precede the 2002 event. Governments were also of the view that the 10-year review process should be coordinated and integrated with the preparations for the tenth session of the Commission in 2002. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work, the tenth session of the Commission is devoted to a comprehensive review of progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 adopted at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly.

35. The Commission with its established practice of participatory involvement of Governments, including ministers, international organizations and major groups, has the capacity to prepare for the 2002 review. Furthermore, the established provisions for financial support for the participation of countries that are members of the Commission greatly facilitate the involvement of national experts. The General Assembly could decide that for the intergovernmental preparatory process for the 2002 review, an open-ended format could be applied in the Commission to allow for participation by all Governments. A proposal was made to support broad participation of developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in the intergovernmental preparatory process through a trust fund.

36. The intergovernmental preparatory process under the aegis of the Commission could be organized in three preparatory sessions, which would replace the two inter-sessional working group meetings and the regular tenth session of the Commission. These three sessions should deal with both substantive and organizational matters related to the 2002 event. All negotiations should preferably take place and be completed during the intergovernmental preparatory process. Bearing in mind the challenges and complexity of the intergovernmental preparatory process for 2002, it would seem important to hold the first preparatory session at an earlier time than the intergovernmental preparations for the regular sessions of the Commission normally start.

37. The first and second preparatory sessions should undertake a comprehensive and critical review of the implementation of the outcome of UNCED, in particular Agenda 21. These two preparatory sessions should result in an agreed text for a review document containing the conclusions of deliberations, including priority areas where further action is needed and a future work programme of the Commission. As suggested by Governments, the review should be undertaken on the basis of the reports from Governments, national councils and/or focal points for sustainable development, regional reports, reports from the secretariats of the conventions that are related to Agenda 21, and a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21 carried out by the United Nations system for the 10-year period since UNCED. Governments also suggested that the review include an assessment of the mechanisms established to support the implementation of Agenda 21 with a view to improving the coordination and comprehensive implementation of Agenda 21. The first and second preparatory sessions could include multi-stakeholder dialogues, hearings or other innovative arrangements to ensure participatory, high-quality preparations.

38. Based on the agreed text for a "review" document, the third and final preparatory session should consider a concise document of a more strategic and political nature, together with other possible forward-looking and action-oriented initiatives to promote sustainable development. This document should reconfirm the need for an integrated and strategic, participatory approach to sustainable development, and address the main challenges and opportunities faced by the international community in the further implementation of Agenda 21. A high-level segment could therefore be an integral part of the third preparatory session. Such a document, adopted by Governments at the 2002 event, would reinvigorate, at the highest political level, the global commitment to a renewed North-South partnership and a higher level of international solidarity to further promote sustainable development.

C. Preparation of documentation

39. At its fifty-fifth session, the General Assembly may consider the proposals for analytical reports on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General. Governments, however, encouraged the United Nations system to start preparing substantive contributions as soon as possible. The General Assembly, in its resolution 54/218, invited the regional commissions, the relevant functional commissions that are implementing chapters of Agenda 21, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, the Global Environment Facility and the secretariats of the environment-related conventions to make substantive contributions to the review process.

40. In addition to the formal documentation needed to support the deliberations, the 2002 review process provides an opportunity for disseminating a variety of related reports, background documents and publications, which could be made available. The preparations of these contributions should start well in advance and their results be made available prior to the commencement of the intergovernmental preparatory process.

41. As a contribution of the United Nations system, the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development decided on the early preparation of the second ACC statement on sustainable development. Such a statement should build on the conclusions of the ACC statement submitted to the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session, in 1997. It should examine whether progress since 1997 has made sustainable development to an overarching framework for work in the United Nations in the social, economic and environmental fields, as recommended in the 1997 ACC statement. It could also outline the specific role that the United Nations system could play in achieving the goals of sustainable development, together with other international organizations.

Annex

Main issues on the agenda of the ninth session of the Commission

1. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work 1998-2002, the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its ninth session in 2001, will consider the following main issues:

(a) Sectoral theme: atmosphere/energy;

(b) Economic sector: energy/transport;

(c) Cross-sectoral theme: information for decision-making and participation and international cooperation for an enabling environment.

I. Sectoral theme: atmosphere/energy

A. Atmosphere

2. The General Assembly in its resolution S-19/2, stated that political will and concerted efforts by the international community, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change, are required to ensure that the global climate and atmosphere are not further damaged, with irreversible consequences for future generations. The production, conversion, distribution and end use of energy are the main source of greenhouse gas emissions. They also contribute significantly to other pollutants — sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide and particulates — with attendant implications to transboundary pollution. The ultimate goal that all countries share is to achieve stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. There is a need for:

(a) Effective policies and measures for improved energy efficiency, accelerated development of renewable sources of energy and development, and the application of new technology for fossil fuels and other energy sources aimed at significant reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants;

(b) International cooperation in the implementation of chapter 9 of Agenda 21, in particular in the transfer of technology to and capacity-building in developing countries;

(c) Strengthening systematic observational networks to identify the possible onset and distribution of climate change and assess potential impacts, particularly at the regional level;

(d) Strengthening the Montreal Protocol to the Convention and ratifying the Copenhagen Amendment to the Montreal Protocol;

(e) Countering rising levels of transboundary air pollution, including through appropriate regional cooperation to reduce pollution levels.

B. Energy

3. A major challenge for the international community is to ensure that energy systems will contribute to the goals of sustainable development. Currently, energy production, conversion and use have discernible adverse effects on the environment: locally because energy-related emissions contaminate air, water and soil, and globally because it enhances the greenhouse effect. The development of energy systems that would meet social, economic and environmental objectives of sustainable development will depend on the urgency with which the international community addresses the need to move towards more sustainable patterns of production, distribution and use of energy. The realization of the benefits of such systems will depend considerably on whether related policy, financial, technological and institutional issues are properly addressed and resolved.

4. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development, which met for its first session from 6 to 10 March 2000 in New York, deliberated on the preparations for the ninth session of the Commission, on energy issues. This involved identifying key issues related to energy and sustainable development, discussion of the programme of work for the time period between the first and second sessions of the Group of Experts and the formulation of a provisional agenda for its second session. In reviewing the themes of energy and sustainable development, due consideration was given to the implementation of the issues of financial resources, transfer of technology,

capacity-building and foreign investment flows to developing countries, and to the importance of national policies.

5. During the deliberations, key issues were identified that represent areas where the international community can promote a movement towards energy systems in support of sustainable development. The following key issues were of particular importance to the participants: accessibility of energy, energy efficiency, renewable energy, advanced fossil fuel technologies, nuclear energy technologies, rural energy, energy and transportation, technology transfer, capacity-building, mobilization of financial resources, and international and regional cooperation.

II. Economic sector: energy/transport

6. In its resolution S-19/2, the General Assembly stated that the transport sector and mobility in general have an essential role to play in economic and social development, and transportation needs will undoubtedly increase. Over the next 20 years, transportation is expected to be the major driving force behind a growing world demand for energy. The transport sector is the largest end-user of energy in developed countries and the fastest growing one in most developing countries. Current patterns of transportation, with their dominant patterns of energy use, are not sustainable and on the basis of current trends may compound the environmental problems that the world is facing as well as impact on health. There is a need for:

(a) Promoting integrated transport policies;

(b) Integrating land-use and urban, peri-urban and rural transport planning, taking into account the need to protect ecosystems;

(c) Measures to mitigate the negative impact of transportation on the environment, including measures to improve efficiency and efficiency standards in the transportation sector;

(d) Further studies on the use of economic instruments for the mitigation of the negative environmental impact of aviation;

(e) Accelerating the phase-out of the use of leaded gasoline;

(f) Promoting voluntary guidelines for environmentally friendly transport, and actions for reducing vehicle emissions of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and volatile organic compounds;

(g) Building partnerships at the national level, involving Governments, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, for strengthening transport infrastructures and developing innovative mass transport schemes.

III. Cross-sectoral theme: information for decision-making and participation and international cooperation for an enabling environment

A. Information for decision-making and participation

7. Particular action will be required on two major programme areas: (a) bridging the data gap and (b) improving the availability of information. The integration and informed use of available information in decision-making processes remains a key issue. There exist, however, considerable differences between geographical regions and countries at different stages of development, as to the availability of relevant primary data (e.g., in the area of sustainable development), the quality, comparability and frequency of data compilation and the subsequent quality of information systems. It should be noted that the Government of Canada has offered to host a meeting of experts on chapter 40 of Agenda 21 in preparation for the ninth session of the Commission.

8. It should be suggested to focus the deliberations at the ninth session on a set of priority issues with the objective of identifying options for further actions. Such priority issues could include:

(a) Further developing indicators as tools to support national decision-making processes, taking into account the work undertaken in the context of the Commission's work programme on indicators of sustainable development;

(b) Developing methodologies to enhance the compatibility of data that are collected from different sources;

(c) Enhancing the institutional and human capacities, in particular of developing countries, for data collection, analysis and assessment and for the monitoring and reporting process;

(d) Enhancing the use of global information systems and map-based information tools;

(e) Improving the access of the public to information related to sustainable development, including through the use of multi-media technologies and tools, such as animated graphical presentations;

(f) Addressing problems of non-uniform standards and methods for handling information and issues related to intellectual property rights.

B. International cooperation for an enabling environment

9. Global change continues to accelerate. The further globalization of world markets, the increase of private-sector finance flows, the widening gap between rich and poor, the world's population passing the six billion mark, and the increasing degradation of the natural environment, with consequences for resource pressure, have all opened up new opportunities but also created new problems for sustainable development.

10. In the debate at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, Governments stated that globalization has created a new imperative for international dialogue and cooperation. They also recognized that the United Nations is in a unique position to foster international cooperation by addressing the impact of changes in the enabling environment on development, which have emerged as a result of globalization and the technological progress. In its resolution 54/218, the General Assembly called upon the Commission *inter alia*, to play its role in assessing the opportunities and challenges of globalization as they relate to sustainable development.